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ABSTRACT

The growing emphasis on student outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness at colleges and universities can act as a change agent for renewal. Institutional effectiveness addresses the major questions encountered in establishing a vision, questions regarding the institution's beneficiaries and their needs. Moreover, these efforts involve setting goals and affirming values. For example, at Yavapai College, in Arizona, administrators, faculty, and staff were all involved in generating ideas for the vision of what the college should become and a staff development day was held to enable employees to review their values and beliefs and affirm institutional values. The purposes and expectations of institutional effectiveness must be communicated to the college community, the larger community, and government, and it is essential that an institutional commitment at the governing board and executive administrative level be made to achieving goals. Institutional effectiveness involves constructing and applying an evaluation system and using the results for improvement. Student outcomes information represents both a powerful managerial resource for institutional self-improvement and a powerful collective resource for restoring higher education to its former priority in the public mind. Finally, institutional effectiveness is a continuous renewal process. The very purpose of the institutional vision is to provide the bedrock upon which constant evolutionary change can take place. (Contains 19 references.) (KP)

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Using Institutional Effectiveness as a Change Agent to Promote Visionary Leadership

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Abstract:

Institutions express their purpose through their mission statements. All activities should support this mission. However mission statements can lose their meaning over time. Institutional effectiveness and assessment activities can be change agents for an institution's renewal.

The institutional effectiveness process involves defining the mission statement of the college, developing institutional goals, and determining outcomes measures. The values and beliefs of the college are identified in the vision. Communication, commitment and motivation are required as every function of the college is involved. Institutional effectiveness is a continuous program; the results of assessment must be used to change and improve the institution.

This paper discusses how institutional effectiveness can be a change agent to promote visionary leadership. Tasks of leadership are explored: envisioning, setting goals, affirming values, communication, commitment, motivation, renewal, and staying the course. Examples are drawn from the change process at one community college, and how the entire college was encouraged to participate in the new leadership style.

Using Institutional Effectiveness as a Change Agent
to Promote Visionary Leadership

A college or university expresses its purpose through its mission statement. Every activity the institution performs should relate to supporting all or part of this vision. Over time, mission statements can lose their meaning, though, unless there is renewal. Higher education is being challenged by students, parents, taxpayers, and the government to be accountable. Student outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness are now being emphasized to show that an institution is doing its job and is producing a product (educated students). These activities are change agents for renewal.

The National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges (as cited in Grossman & Duncan, 1989) defines institutional effectiveness as: "the process of articulating the mission of the college, setting goals, defining how the college and community will know when these goals are being met, and using the data from assessment in an ongoing cycle of planning and evaluation" (p. 5). Institutional effectiveness addresses the major questions encountered in establishing a vision: who are the beneficiaries and what are their needs. The vision must be owned by the board of governors and the president. Support must come from everyone in the institution, including the students. Implementation involves tasks of leadership. The values and beliefs of the college are identified in the process of defining the outcomes that the college expects. Communication, commitment and motivation are important as every function of the college should be part of assessment. Institutional effectiveness involves renewal as the results of assessment must be used to change and improve. Staying the course is manifest in that institutional effectiveness is a continuous process.

Yavapai College, a community college in Arizona, has undertaken the process of defining a student outcomes assessment program, and used the concept of institutional effectiveness as a whole to renew its vision. Leadership for Yavapai College's vision of institutional effectiveness began with the commitment of the college president and the support of the board of governors. Leadership tasks were performed by members of the faculty, staff, and administration. A Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness committee was formed with faculty co-chairs. A core group of people, including faculty, staff, and administration, was responsible for collecting ideas and drafting an assessment plan. The committee was also involved in providing training, encouragement, and support for others to become part of the effort and to conduct assessment

projects. Thus institutional effectiveness was not only the college's vision, but it was also the personal vision of people at the college.

ENVISIONING

Father Theodore Hesburgh, former president of Notre Dame University, (as cited in Bowen, 1987) said: "The very essence of leadership is you have to have a vision. It's got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet" (p. 68).

A vision is an idea that leads inspiration, challenge, passion, clarity, and unity (Murray, 1993). A vision defines what the institution can and should accomplish, and includes a reachable set of goals depicting the mission (Furlong, 1993). Every community college and university has a mission statement. In many institutions this is accompanied by a philosophy statement. The mission and philosophy are basic components of a vision.

In establishing a vision, major questions include who are the beneficiaries and what are their needs. Education benefits not only students, but society as a whole. Higher education at the community college level prepares students for transfer education, occupational education, general education, developmental education, and lifelong learning. Student development programs and services also support students in defining and attaining their educational goals.

American colleges and universities are being asked whether they are preparing their students for the marketplace and whether they are spending their funds wisely. All the regional accrediting bodies now include student outcomes assessment in their criteria requirements. Institutional effectiveness involves a review of the mission statement to be sure it is accurate and representative of the institution's intended purposes. Institutional goals and objectives are defined which are consistent with the mission, and can be evaluated in the programs. "Community colleges should seize this opportunity to define effectiveness and use the results to improve programs and services and celebrate our successes" (Hudgins, 1993, p. 44).

The mission statement of a college should be "fundamentally a forward-looking statement. It is not a public relations piece designed to brag about particular programs or aspects of the institution. Rather, ... it should represent a collective commitment setting forth what the institution wishes to maintain or to become." (Hubbard, 1992, p. 109) A clear mission statement gives the institution a context for meeting the challenges of a changing environment, for developing and conducting programs that are within its scope, and for providing a frame of reference against which to evaluate itself. The mission statement also

defines the institution's purpose within higher education which constituents can rally around and identify products and unique attributes.

The mission of the college must be communicated to others. Most college catalogues include the mission statement. Students, parents, the community, as well as faculty, administration, and staff must be aware and understand the purpose of the institution.

As part of the Self-Study for continuing accreditation with North Central Association, Yavapai College reviewed its overall mission and vision. Administrators, faculty, and staff were all involved in brainstorming ideas for the vision of what this college should be like in the future. The attitude was that this was an opportunity to restate our values, beliefs, and norms. Presidential leadership had changed. People were encouraged to collectively own the vision so that each person would help make it happen.

The people involved in student outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness at Yavapai College wrote philosophy and purpose statements that set the tone and general focus for related efforts. As the definition of this vision progressed, there was interaction between the group and the President. The people involved in the student outcomes assessment process included new employees as well as senior employees; people new to assessment, those who had studied assessment, and some with experience in assessment. All of the people were owners of the vision and change agents to transform the vision into reality. "Leaders require *foresight*, so that they can judge how the vision fits into the way the environment of the organization may evolve; *hindsight*, so that the vision does not violate the traditions and culture of the organization; a *world view*, within which to interpret the impact of possible new developments and trends; *depth perception*, so that the whole picture can be seen in appropriate detail and perspective; *peripheral vision*, so that the possible responses of competitors and other stake-holders to the new direction can be comprehended; and a process of *revision*, so that all visions previously synthesized are constantly reviewed as the environment changes" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 102-103).

SETTING GOALS

Institutional effectiveness requires that each institution "define its expected educational results and describe how these results will be ascertained" (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1984, p. 9). No two colleges or universities are exactly alike, and thus no two colleges or universities will define their vision the same. While it is interesting to study what other schools are doing in student outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness, and it is acknowledged that ideas are borrowed and exchanged, there is no bluebook for how to implement a vision of institutional effectiveness.

Dimensions of effectiveness in higher education include: student educational satisfaction, student academic development, student career development, student personal development, faculty and administrator employment satisfaction, professional development and quality of the faculty, systems openness and community interaction, ability to acquire resources, and organizational health (Cameron, 1980). The College of Education at the University of Northern Colorado (as cited in Barnett et al., 1992) defined five core learning experiences important to school leaders:

1. *Understanding Self: Developing a Personal Vision for Educational Leadership* enables students to develop an appreciation of their fundamental values and attitudes and how they relate to governance, administration and leadership, and curriculum development issues.
2. *Using Inquiry: Framing Problems and Making Decision in Educational Leadership* helps students understand alternative ways of knowing that are frequently used by school leaders and how they relate to leadership in organization.
3. *Shaping Organizations: Management and Leadership in Education* helps students understand structural components of educational organizations and theoretical frameworks that describe organizational behavior.
4. *Understanding People: Professional Development and Educational Leadership* explores issues related to personnel development within educational organizations, adult learning and development, and staff appraisal.
5. *Understanding Environments: Social, Political, Economic, and Legal Influences* introduces concepts of demography, cultural diversity, governance, politics, law, and finance that influence policies and operations and explores how educators in turn influence external environments. (p. 73)

Goals and objectives related to institutional effectiveness are defined at many levels. At an institutional level the college expresses what it thinks students taking its classes should experience. These expectations are broad and general. At a program level the college defines goals of what students should achieve upon completion. Programs may be the different degrees and certificates offered, the general education or core requirements, or the results of using services provided (e.g., counseling). Goals and objectives are further detailed for the individual courses as to the competencies and skills the students should learn (e.g., English Composition, Welding). While the objectives will be articulated at the different levels within the institution, they must be consistent. All institutional, program, and course goals must support the mission statement.

From the goals, indicators of measurable outcomes are determined for which quantifiable data can be obtained. For example, an institutional goal at Yavapai College is

to provide vocational education to prepare students for the work force. Students taking specific vocational courses must demonstrate related competencies. One of the objectives for students completing the college's nursing program is preparation for taking the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses.

AFFIRMING VALUES

In defining the goals and objectives related to institutional effectiveness, the college states its values and beliefs about student learning. The educational experience as a whole affects students beyond just learning the subjects being taught. This includes students' reactions to services, involvement in intercollegiate activities, and interactions with not only the faculty and staff at the college but also with other students.

The employees at Yavapai College reviewed their values and beliefs for the institution at a Staff Development Day. It was interesting that the values and beliefs important to the maintenance personnel were same values and beliefs that were important to the faculty. Among the values discussed were honesty, respect, open communication and access, fair-mindedness, empathy, opportunity to receive an education, responsibility, friendly environment, sense of humor, and integrity. Mt. Hood Community College in Oregon formulated an organizational value system on the following principles: "regard for the value, dignity, and human potential of each individual; understanding of the organization as an open system with all parts interacting and interdependent with each other as well as the external environment; involvement in shared organizational vision, mission, goals, and plans; support for open communication based upon valid information; openness for flexibility, adaptation, change, self-renewal, self-correction, and problem solving; and respect for the relevancy of diverse views and the expertise of those closest to task" (Alfred & Kreider, 1991, p. 38).

People and institutions do not always take time to affirm their values and beliefs by explicitly stating and discussing them. Each individual concerned with an institution has their own personal values, but the values and beliefs to be demonstrated by the institution must be shared. In the process of developing and communicating an internal consistent set of values, beliefs, and norms, the constituents must define and understand common meanings. The actions of everyone in the organization must reflect the institutional values to be effective in making the vision become a reality. "Educational leaders possess knowledge of self, others, organizations, and society necessary to perform creatively and effectively in diverse environments. They engage people in identifying and working toward the accomplishment of a shared vision for the organization. Leaders incorporate the

ideas, values, and experiences reflective of a pluralistic society and promote continual learning." (Barnett et al., 1992, p. 72)

COMMUNICATION

"A vision of the future is not offered once and for all by the leader and then allowed to fade away. It must be repeated time and again. It must be incorporated in the organization's culture and reinforced through the strategy and decision-making process. It must be constantly evaluated for possible change in the light of new circumstances." (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 108-109)

The purposes and expectations of institutional effectiveness must be communicated to everyone: the administration, faculty, staff, students, community, and the government. The definitions of institutional effectiveness and student outcomes assessment must be understood. Educating others about the vision of institutional effectiveness includes making related materials available for people to read, holding staff development training sessions, and sending people to related conferences and workshops. The people at the institution need to discuss what institutional effectiveness means in their own jobs, and what their roles are with respect to the institution's overall plan. They must communicate not only the results of their efforts, but also their plans. People must feel that the vision of institutional effectiveness is a continuous priority.

The students must also understand the importance of assessment and that the institution is serious about its efforts to obtain useful information. If students treat assessment efforts as a joke, then collecting meaningful data will be sabotaged. In communicating the purposes of assessment to the students, requirements should appear in the college catalog, be explained to students and their parents during orientation, and be reiterated through the advising process. Student involvement on related assessment-planning committees will also "ensure student input and create another link between students and staff" (Erwin, 1991, p. 30).

Peter Ewell (1983) states that student outcomes information will be most successful when the following themes are present:

- When the information needs of institutional decision makers are carefully asserted by those collecting the data, and the relevance of student-outcomes information to their particular area of responsibility is stressed continually by those providing it.
- When the information collected is disseminated in a series of tailored memos to particular administrators or is included in the response to a particular decision maker's request for information.

- When the information collected is presented comparatively so that contrasts between different types of students and trends over time are highlighted.
- When the information collected is effectively integrated with other kinds of student data to yield a comprehensive picture of a particular problem.
- When a clearly identifiable institutional problem is present, for example, a high attrition rate - and where there is high-level administrative commitment to solve the problem.
- When an appropriate forum for meaningfully discussing the institutional implications of student-outcomes information is present - for example, a retention or student-success committee with broad representation and high-level administrative endorsement.
- When an attitude can be developed throughout the institution that the improvement of student outcomes is important, can be accomplished, and will be rewarded. (p. 52-55)

COMMITMENT

For an educational institution to achieve its vision there needs to be broad involvement of the campus community. Institutional effectiveness requires a commitment at the governing board and executive administration level. It must assure that "college programs and resources (will be) more effectively used to achieve the institution's purpose" (Hudgins, 1993, p. 43). This means that the vision will be supported through finances, planning, and implementation. It must also emphasize that the vision of institutional effectiveness promotes program improvement first and accountability second. Results should not be used in a punitive manner. If the results do not match the expectations then further study may show that the expectations were unrealistic or that changes are needed. People need to feel safe in taking risks and seeking answers to questions.

Institutional effectiveness needs a variety of specialists - faculty, staff development professionals, assessment and testing experts, curriculum specialists, and researchers - to work together "to design and implement a system of performance standards, authentic assessments, and professional development intended to change the way the American school system works" (Simmons & Resnick, 1993, p. 11). Institutional effectiveness requires participation by a variety of constituent groups all contributing "ideas and comments about the program objectives, assessment methods, and, in some cases, interpretations" (Erwin, 1991, p. 25). There must be consensus regarding the vision of where the institution wants to go.

When a vision of institutional effectiveness commences, the people involved will probably have reactions along the following stages: "discovery, questioning, resistance, participation, and commitment" (Erwin, 1991, p. 26). People will be curious about the new vision, want to understand what it means, may resist change and be doubtful if efforts to achieve the vision are worthwhile, may try pilot projects, and if convinced will be committed. Building commitment from the college community in a vision of institutional effectiveness is part of achieving workable unity.

MOTIVATION

"When individuals feel that they can make a difference and that they can improve the society in which they are living through their participation in an organization, then it is much more likely that they will bring vigor and enthusiasm to their tasks and that the results of their work will be mutually reinforcing" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 91). Institutional effectiveness efforts require collaboration and a spirit of collegiality for the vision to grow and mature. In the process, all individuals in the organization also grow. Knowledge by some members can motivate the others "to acquire the skills they need to help the group achieve its goals" (Fessler, 1976, p. 120).

It is important that all individuals have growth and development throughout their lives and jobs. Workshops help people develop their skills to become better performers. Teamwork can also help motivate people. People need to feel that their input matters and that their contribution is important to the achievement of the institution's vision. People need to be given the responsibility and trust to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. People responsible for institutional effectiveness efforts should have the flexibility to design their own goals and methods of assessment. Pilot projects allow ideas to be tested. Projects may be further refined or rejected depending on their success. Either way, the results and procedures are learning experiences.

People should not expect others to make changes for them, but should seize the opportunities themselves. "Faculty and staff committed to quality in programs and services are the most important ingredient in effectiveness" (Alfred & Kreider, 1991, p. 37). Peoples' actions reflect their convictions, values, goals, and vision.

RENEWAL

Institutional effectiveness involves constructing and applying an evaluation system and using the results for improvement. An overall goal is to improve student performance and the ability of students to achieve their educational goals. "Institutional effectiveness

can be [the] change agent for renewing the American community college" (Hudgins, 1993, p. 44).

"Because individual community colleges are constantly changing and adding to their mission, no conception of effectiveness will prevail over time" (Alfred & Kreider, 1991, p. 34). The key to institutional effectiveness is using the results as a feedback loop. In evaluating the data collected from the measures, reviewers must exert caution that "information on student outcomes appropriately informs decision only when it is in the company of other kinds of information" (Ewell, 1983, p. 21). This means that the inputs of society, needs of employers, impacts of competitor providers, institutional constraints, available resources, and other appropriate factors must be part of the evaluation process. Care must be given that the data collected and analyzed is reliable and valid. Multiple measures ensure that the results are accurate and representative. Research and analysis must represent best evidence, and not be influenced by politics or desired outcomes.

In institutional effectiveness and student outcomes assessment processes the people involved should take time to recognize and celebrate their successes. Community colleges are being criticized for not having high graduation and transfer rates, but that is only one part of their mission. The employment rates of vocational students and achievement by students of short-term educational goals are successes that represent other parts of a community college's mission. After noting what the institution is doing well, attention should be given to what it can do better. The assessment process can "elicit changes in (1) curriculum requirements, (2) curriculum content or student service programs, and (3) methods of instruction or service delivery" (Erwin, 1991, p. 32). As part of the renewal task, the vision should also be reviewed. Goals and values need to be affirmed, modified, or created. The results must be communicated and used in future actions. Motivation and direction for new or continuing efforts must be clarified. Both the people and the institution must be renewed.

"Effectiveness is not a measurement process, it's a change process" (Lorenzo, 1990). Renewal is essential for a vision to perpetuate. "If an institution considers the assessment process as a means, not an end, then discussions about program quality will be hard to separate from discussions about instructional methods, curricula, programs, and services. An assessment program will remain alive and will flourish only if the principles of assessment are integrated into educational decision-making processes." (Erwin, 1991, p. 153)

STAYING THE COURSE

"Decisions are constantly made in community colleges, for the same reason as in any other organization. There is constant change. Resources, facilities, faculty, and students affect the status quo. Community college enrollments are extremely sensitive to external factors, particularly population changes, employment opportunities, and public perceptions of the value of education." (Moss, 1986, p. 13) It is important to understand what an institution's vision means. All aspects of the institution must be understood as to how they act to support the mission.

Staying the course involves planning for the future. "The planning process becomes a gathering point for various institutional assessment activities, so that information can be integrated, plans for action developed, and priorities established" (Moore, 1986, p. 59). Colleges must understand who are their students and what are their objectives. Institutions must be concerned with identifying and improving the impact of their programs on students. Peter Ewell (1983) defines the following ways student-outcomes information has proved of value in ongoing institutional activities and decision processes:

- Preparation of Accreditation Self Studies
- Program Review/Unit Evaluation Activities
- Institutional Planning and Budget Review Activities
- Developing Student-Retention Strategies
- Developing Recruitment Materials and Strategies. (p. 48-51)

Institutional effectiveness must be done primarily for the institution's own benefit. A secondary benefit is for accreditation and accountability to outside agencies. Through a vision of institutional effectiveness, colleges and universities can "create a professional development system that will transform the way educators view teaching, learning, and assessment" (Simmons & Resnick, 1993, p. 12). Staying the course involves persistence of an institution's goals.

> At the most general level, student-outcomes information represents both a powerful managerial resource for institutional self-improvement and a powerful collective resource for restoring higher education to its former priority in the public mind. By means of a thoughtful and participatory program of student-outcomes assessment, an institution can assess a wide range of programmatic impacts on its students and thus compare its actual achievements with its stated educational aspirations. Administrators have both the right and the responsibility to create accountability structures for themselves, for faculty, and for students as well, to ensure that educational outcomes most nearly approach the institution's goals. At the same time, by means of collective, honest, and unselfconscious communication of the results of

> outcome assessments to the public and to those with funding authority, the general credibility of the 'self-evident' benefits of higher education can be more firmly reestablished. (Ewell, 1983, p. 66)

SUMMARY

The vision of institutional effectiveness involves defining the mission statements of the college, developing institutional goals, and determining outcomes measures. It requires a commitment of the college and involvement of all units. The leaders and the constituents must be owners. Communication, commitment, and motivation are important as every function in the college should be part of assessment. Institutional effectiveness is a continuous renewal process as the results of assessment must be used to change and improve. "The very purpose of the vision is to provide the bedrock upon which constant evolutionary, opportunistic change can take place" (Peters, 1987, p. 493).

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